



The Rotherham Parent Partnership Service

Does a Diagnosis Matter?

For many parents, trying to get a diagnosis for their child's needs is important as it enables them to understand **why** their child is experiencing the difficulties they are. However, having a particular diagnosis should not have an effect on the level of support you or your child receives.

People with the same condition may be affected in very different ways, some may be severely affected others only mildly. This will make a difference to the amount and kind of help needed.

- Treatment, therapy or teaching will be tailored to your child's particular needs, and not to the name of the condition.
- If appropriate, you will be entitled to have a Social Services assessment of your child's needs and of your needs as a parent or carer, whether your child has a named diagnosis or not.
- Disability Living Allowance is offered on the basis of your child's difficulties and the support they need. Entitlement does not depend on being able to name the disorder your child has.
- Your child is entitled to have access to different or extra support if they need it. This does not depend on knowing the cause of their difficulties.

"I felt that getting a name for our daughter's condition would help us when explaining to others what was wrong, but in the end it didn't really matter. All the professionals involved needed to know was what the immediate difficulties were, so the right care could be arranged."

(Mother)

Does my child need a Statement of Special Educational Needs to get Extra support in school?

Many children have special educational needs (SEN), we would expect one child in every five would experience some form of difficulty at some stage in their schooling. In the past much of the money for children with SEN was held by the Local Education Authority (LEA), extra money came into the school if a child had a Statement of SEN. Many LEAs have been criticised for spending too much money on assessing children for Statements of SEN and too little on the majority of children with SEN who do not have them.

Rotherham LEA has provided Statements for a much higher proportion of children than other Authorities across the country. It is a time consuming and bureaucratic procedure which means support is put in when a child has failed rather than early to help them succeed. The Authority is now trying to reduce the number of children with Statements to reduce bureaucracy and allow schools to be flexible in the way money is used.



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Rotherham, like most other LEA's, has delegated funding for children with Statements of SEN to schools. This comes into schools as part of their whole school budget, along with funding allocated for the support of children at School Action, and School Action Plus. Both of these funding streams should be used along with the whole school budget to support all children with special educational needs. Head teachers are responsible for managing these budgets.

By reducing the number of Statements the LEA expects to significantly reduce administrative costs and move funding, which had been attached to statements, into the schools delegated budget. This will enable resources to be directed to a child with SEN much earlier, without the delay between identifying a child's needs and allocating resources through a Statement.

So how does my child get the extra help they need?

What is School Action?

If your child is having difficulties in school, they can get help that is either extra to and/or different from the help that schools usually give children in setting work that matches their ability.

The school will discuss your child's needs with you and let you know about the progress your child is making as a result of the extra help.

This may be recorded in a document called an Individual Education Plan (IEP). The IEP should be reviewed regularly to ensure progress is made.

What is School Action Plus?

If your child does not make the progress on School Action that had been expected, the next step may be to move onto School Action Plus.

At School Action Plus, staff from services outside school will be asked to get involved e.g. Learning Support, Education Psychology or Behaviour Support. They may work personally with your child or give advice to school staff.

If your child makes good progress the next step may be to go back to School Action. If your child is making progress but still needs extra help or if other ways of helping are going to be tried they will stay at School Action Plus. If these things do not seem to be helping the school may request an Assessment of Special Educational Needs. If appropriate the LEA may then issue your child with a Statement of Special Educational Needs.



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So what can I do now?

Every school has a Special Educational Needs Co ordinator who you can speak to about your child's needs. Arrange a convenient time to speak with them about your child's needs and what is being done in school to meet these.

The SENCO or your child's class teacher will be able to tell you who else is involved with your child and when they are next in school.

You are part of the team. Staff at school will expect to share information with you about your child. You and school staff both have important information about how your child learns and can work together to help your child succeed.

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